

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 034 639

RC 003 909

AUTHOR Folkman, William S.
TITLE Attitudes and Values in a Rural Development Area:
Van Buren County, Arkansas.
INSTITUTION Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station,
Fayetteville.
REPORT NO Bull-650
PUB DATE Jan 62
NOTE 26p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.25 HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Tests, Economically Disadvantaged,
*Economic Factors, Farmers, Personal Values, *Rural
Areas, Rural Development, Rural Economics, *Rural
Farm Residents, *Social Values, Southern Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Arkansas, Van Buren County

ABSTRACT

The general purposes of this study were (1) to identify the complex of attitudes and values held by rural people in a designated Rural Development Pilot County and (2) to relate these to certain measures of economic and social adjustment. A sample of 139 families were assessed by the Straus Rural Attitude Profile and by a structured interview technique which provided information on economic factors and social status. The results indicated that change for its own sake or for purely economic reasons would not seem to have a very high priority, that rural living had a high value but farming as an occupation was dimly viewed, and that off-farm occupational opportunities in the vicinity would be welcomed. The analysis of value orientation through a study of factors determining social status revealed a configuration basically the same as that of the rest of the country, but with considerably less emphasis on success or achievement in the usual sense of these terms. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (DK)

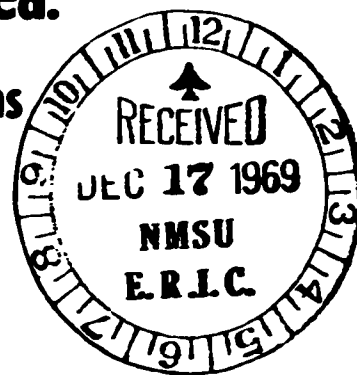
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ED034639

Attitudes and Values in a Rural Development Area: Van Buren County, Arkansas



KC 003909

**AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
Division of Agriculture
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville**

JANUARY, 1962

BULLETIN 650

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Attitudes and Values in a Rural Development Area: Van Buren County, Arkansas

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In recent years there has been growing awareness of, and concern for, the plight of the large proportion of farmers in this country who have been variously characterized as "low income," "underemployed," or "economically depressed." In contrast to the rest of the population, including other farmers who have enjoyed increased productivity and income, these farmers have remained in a chronic "low-production" status. Most of the general agricultural programs have not been oriented toward the particular problems of these farmers. Likewise, agricultural research has dealt only to a limited degree with their specific problems.

We are coming to see that this longstanding problem of poverty in many rural areas is not solely a private and personal affair of the families who are poor but has social roots and major social implications for the whole society. This change in thinking has culminated at the national level in proposals to broaden agricultural research and action programs to encompass the problems this situation presents. Since Arkansas, together with much of the South, has a high proportion of low-income rural people, the problem is particularly pressing here.

The Rural Development Program has accentuated the need for research findings on the characteristics of people in low-income areas. Questions have been raised as to how these depressed conditions developed and why they persist in the face of general economic expansion. Action agencies, such as the Agricultural Extension Service, indicate that they have difficulty in involving these people in their programs. Methods and techniques effective with the less disadvantaged have proven quite inadequate in reaching those most in need of assistance.

All of these things have led to recognition of the need for greater understanding of the social and psychological characteristics of the people involved. There are strong indications that they are hampered in taking advantage of their possibilities by, among other things, the systems of attitudes and values they hold.

¹Formerly associate rural sociologist; resigned June 30, 1959.

This study was designed to throw some light on their attitudes and values.

Values are dynamic forces in the behavior of individuals and groups. *Value*, as a concept, is difficult to define and consequently it is variously defined.² As used here, the central notion is that values serve as criteria by which choices are made between alternative courses of action. Such a definition is particularly amenable to empirical study.

The term *attitude* is a closely related concept, sometimes used interchangeably with *value*. As Straus points out, "The concept of value implies judgment of worth, often in terms of normative standards, whereas attitude refers to a specific response predisposition."³

In spite of the importance many attach to values in the understanding of behavior, values are difficult to study and the methodology is in a rather rudimentary stage of development. This study, therefore, should be viewed as essentially exploratory in nature and the observations should not be accepted as definitive.

The original plans called for a similar study in one of the Delta pilot counties, as well as a control study in a more economically advanced county in the State. This report suffers from a lack of comparative data, but it is presented in the hope that it will stimulate further research, as well as providing some useful insights for those working in action programs in similar areas.

Purposes of the Study

The more important purposes of this study were: (1) to identify the complex of attitudes and values held by rural people in a designated Rural Development Pilot County; and (2) to relate these to certain measures of economic and social adjustment.

Characteristics of the Area Studied

Van Buren County is one of the 12 counties in Arkansas Economic Area 1 b. The economic areas were drawn by the U. S. Bureau of the Census on the basis of similar agricultural, in-

² Kluckhohn, Clyde, et al, "Values and value-orientation in the theory of action," in *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Eds. Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils), p. 395, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1951. See also: Williams, R. M., Jr., *American Society: A Sociological Interpretation*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1951; Harding, L. W., "A value-type generalizations test," *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 19, Feb. 1944, pp. 53-79; Wilkening, E. A., "Techniques of assessing farm family values," *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 19, No. 1, March 1954, pp. 39-49; Straus, Murray A., "A technique of measuring values in rural life," *Wash. Agr. Expt. Sta. Tech. Bul. 29*, August 1959; Rosenberg, Morris, Edward Suchman, and Rose K. Golden, *Occupations and Values*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1957.

³ Straus, Murray A., "A technique of measuring values in rural life," *Wash. Agr. Expt. Sta. Tech. Bul. 29*, 1959.

dustrial, and commercial activities, and similar demographic, climatic, physiographic, and cultural factors.⁴

The county is similar to the rest of the area in that the topography is generally rough, hilly, and wooded. A limited amount of fertile bottomland is found along the major streams in the southeastern part of the county. Farms are small in terms of actual use. Of the average of 180 acres in the farm as shown by the 1959 census of agriculture, 16 acres were devoted to crops. The remainder was only extensively utilized, with about 90 percent of it in pasture and woodland. Many farms were once of a subsistence type, but now they are often supplemented by off-farm work.

Production of livestock is the major enterprise and pasturage is the principal use of farm land. Broiler production is a quite recent introduction. Dairying is important in the southeastern section of the county. Cotton was once relatively important, but national overproduction, losses caused by boll weevils, and inability to compete with other areas have essentially eliminated its production in the county. However, such row crop production, in the eyes of the older farmers, is still equated with farming and in their terms "they don't farm around here anymore." Despite the fact that farms are heavily wooded, most farmers report little income from their own timber. However, wood industries provide the bulk of off-farm work opportunities in the county.

Rapid decline is occurring in the extent to which land of the county is utilized agriculturally. Between 1950 and 1959 the number of farms in the county and the amount of land in farms decreased by nearly one-third, and the amount of land in crops by more than one-half. Land cultivated in crops comprised 14 percent of the land in farms in 1950 and 9 percent in 1959.⁵

The waters impounded by the Greers Ferry Dam, now under construction in a neighboring county, will inundate much of the better agricultural land in Van Buren County but will add to the tourist and recreational appeal of this rugged area.

High birth rates and heavy outmigration of population have characterized Van Buren County along with the rest of the Ozark area.⁶ The heavy outmigration during and following World War II has permitted some economic readjustments. Some movement

⁴ Bogue, Donald J., "State Economic Areas," U. S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, 1951.

⁵ Census of Agriculture, Arkansas, 1950; preliminary, Series AC 59-1, Van Buren County, 1959; U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

⁶ Metzler, William H., and J. L. Charlton, "Employment and underemployment of rural people in the Ozark area," Ark. Agr. Expt. Sta. Bul. 604, 1958. This contains an excellent description of the area.

into the area also has occurred, but not enough to disrupt the essentially homogeneous character of the population.

Method and Procedure

The study is concerned with heads of households from the rural areas of Van Buren County who were under 65 years of age and in fair or better health. Further qualifications included that they be from unbroken homes and that they obtained at least part of their family income from farming. The sample was selected from a larger sample used in 1956 in a cooperative study by the Arkansas Agricultural Extension Service and the State Employment Security Division.⁷

The original sample had been drawn by the area sampling method to represent the open-country population of the county.⁸ After the above criteria were applied to the original sample of 303, 139 families remained. Interviews were completed with 119 heads of households out of this 139. Fourteen were not contacted as they had left the county, and three because they could not be located. There were three refusals. The interviewing of the 119 heads was done during August, 1957. Data from the schedules of the original survey, which covered the previous year, were also used.

Several methods were used to assess the attitudes and values of the respondents. The Straus Rural Attitude Profile,⁹ a "forced choice" instrument, was used to measure four variables which are hypothesized to be important value dimensions in contemporary American life. These variables are Innovation Proneness, Rural Life Preference, Primary Group Preference, and Economic Motivation.

Briefly, those who scored high on the Innovation Proneness scale would be expected to "have an interest in and a desire to seek changes in farming or homemaking techniques and to introduce such changes in their own operation when practical." In contrast, low scoring individuals are either negative or neutral toward such changes. "Individuals who view farming objectively as merely one of a number of possible occupations are expected to score low" on the Rural Life Preference scale, while those who view farming and rural residence as most desirable should score

⁷ "Rural Development Survey," Arkansas Extension Service and State Employment Security Division, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1957, unpublished.

⁸ The original sample comprised 20 percent of the estimated 1,200 farm and 300 nonfarm families exclusive of those residing in the villages. In the selection of families an area sampling technique was applied. Thirty areas were delineated on an Arkansas State Highway Commission map, each containing 10 dwelling symbols, and these areas were systematically separated from other locations by an equal number of dwellings. The maps served as a guide to the field workers in locating the families at each area for inclusion in the sample.

⁹ Straus, op. cit.

high. Close, primary type contacts (such as those with family or neighbors) are preferred over freer, more diverse patterns of association by those who score high on the Primary Group Preference scale. A high score on the Economic Motivation scale should indicate an emphasis on "monetary gain as more important than such traditional rural values as freedom from debt and self sufficiency."

The Straus test requires the respondent to select the statement that applies most closely to him ("most like him") and the one that he considers least appropriate ("least like him") from each of 12 sets of four statements. The test was well received by the respondents, but the relatively low reading facility of some necessitated that the interviewer read along with the respondent in such instances.

To supplement the Straus approach, another procedure was developed for use in the interviews. Through a ranking technique, seven goals considered pertinent to rural living were studied. These goals included: owning one's farm free from debt, having one's children settled near by, being known in the community as a successful man, having modern conveniences and other comforts in the home, having many good friends in the community, being one's own boss, and providing one's children with a good education.¹⁰ Each of these goals was represented on a separate card by a simple line drawing illustration, as well as by a statement identifying the goal. The respondents were handed the cards and asked to arrange them in order of their importance to them. The pictures proved particularly helpful with those who experienced some difficulty in reading.

Another area explored through this same ranking technique was determining the factors considered important in the social standing of an individual in his community. The factors ranked were: family life, property or wealth, power and authority, personal qualities, personal achievements, and acceptance of the value orientation of the community.

Direct questioning was used to supplement the above-mentioned indices and also to explore other values amenable to such an approach.

¹⁰ Three of these goals were taken from Wilkening's list of five "family goals" ranked by Wisconsin farm operators and their wives in Wilkening, E. A. "Techniques of assessing farm family values," *Rural Sociology* Vol. 19, No. 1, p. 44, March 1954.

THE OPEN-COUNTRY POPULATION OF VAN BUREN COUNTY

Metzler and Charlton¹¹ showed there has been an outmigration of farm youth and large farm families from the Ozarks, and that the remaining smaller and older families have been augmented by the in-migration of retired families. As a result, persons of most active working or employable ages constitute a smaller proportion than they once were.

Although these changes have been considerable, they fall short of an adequate adjustment of population to resources. In fact, in some respects they have added new dimensions to the problem. Many of these older families lack adequate income from their retirement or other non-work sources and a high proportion of them are in ill health and are unable to work.

In the present study, a sample was desired that might be presumed to have a potential for adjustment outside of retirement or public welfare. However, the proportion lost from the original sample in arriving at the final sample gives some idea of the size of the welfare problem. When heads of households over 65 years of age and those with the (in the main) age-related characteristics of being in poor health, from broken homes, and not engaged in farming operations were eliminated from the sample, less than half of the original 303 remained. Of the 167 eliminated, 93 were 65 years of age and over, 81 were in "poor" health, 28 were from broken homes, and 55 had no farm operations. Obviously some had two or more of these characteristics.

Low income is particularly prevalent among the old and infirm. By their exclusion, the proportion with incomes under \$2,500 was reduced from three-fourths to two-thirds. However, as Table 1 shows, low income is a problem for many of those remaining in the sample.

All of the 119 heads of households with whom interviews were completed had some tie to agriculture. In addition to being open-country residents, they also either owned farmland or had some farm income. The extent to which they were dependent on farming for their livelihood, however, varied from those who had no other income to those who received little income from agricultural sources. The separating of those who obtained their livelihood mainly from the farm from those who obtained theirs mainly from other sources throws further light on the nature of the

¹¹ Op. cit. See also Bird, Ronald, Frank Miller, Samuel C. Turner, "Resources and level of income of farm and rural nonfarm households in Eastern Ozarks of Missouri," Mo. Agr. Expt. Sta. Res. Bul. 661, 1958, p. 19.

Table 1. Comparison of the Total Family Income of Families in the Original Sample with Those in the Final Sample, Van Buren County¹

| Total family income | Families in original sample | | Families in final sample | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Less than \$1,500 | 101 | 33 | 35 | 29 |
| \$1,500 to \$2,499 | 128 | 42 | 47 | 40 |
| \$2,500 or more | 74 | 25 | 37 | 31 |
| Total | 303 | 100 | 119 | 100 |

¹ The income data apply to the year 1956. The field interviewing for the final sample was conducted during August of 1957. Subsequent tables apply to these dates.

selected sample.¹² In Table 2 they are further classified on the basis of size of total family income from all sources. Unfortunately, the size of the sample does not permit a simultaneous computation of significance of differences.

As might be expected, those gaining all or most of their income from farming had more land at their disposal and had a greater length of farming experience. Although the nonfarm group had a higher proportion of automobile ownership, this does not mean that many of the farm operators were without some means of vehicular transportation. Sixty-seven percent of them owned a truck, with 16 percent of those owning a truck also owning a car.

When the basis of analysis was size rather than source of income, acres of land owned, school grades completed, and scores on the participation and adoption of new practices indexes were found to be significantly different. All were positively related to higher incomes.

The difference in average age of the farmers and nonfarmers would seem to indicate that fewer young men are going into farming. On the other hand, it may indicate that middle-aged persons, once committed to farming, have difficulty leaving the occupation, both because they are at a disadvantage in securing off-farm work and because they cannot readily liquidate their investment in agriculture.

The extent to which respondents classified as nonfarm owned or controlled land and engaged in some farming operations is perhaps surprising. Of the mainly nonfarm operators, 54 were full-owners of farms with an average of 113 acres of land, 8 were part-owners with an average of 92 acres in ownership and an additional 111 acres rented, 8 were non-owners renting an average

¹² The division was made between those who received 50 percent or more of total family income from their farm and those who received less than 50 percent.

**Table 2. Selected Socio-Economic Characteristics of Open-Country Residents
by Source and Size of Family Income**

| Characteristic | | Income farm only or mainly | | | | Income nonfarm mainly | | | |
|--|---------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | | Less than \$1,500 | \$1,500 to \$2,499 | \$2,500 or more | All families | Less than \$1,500 | \$1,500 to \$2,499 | \$2,500 or more | All families |
| | | (N = 21) | (N = 15) | (N = 12) | (N = 48) | (N = 14) | (N = 32) | (N = 25) | (N = 71) |
| Age of operator, mean | Years | 51 | 52 | 47 | 50 | 46 | 44 | 44 | 45 |
| School grades completed, median | Number | 8.1 | 9.6 | 9.7 | 8.9 | 8.7 | 8.1 | 10.4 | 8.7 |
| Length of farming experience | Years | 27 | 28 | 21 | 26 | 23 | 18 | 16 | 8 |
| Size of farm, mean | | | | | | | | | |
| Owned | Acres | 133 | 129 | 245 | 160 | 94 | 68 | 130 | 91 |
| All land in farm | Acres | 148 | 193 | 278 | 195 | 117 | 100 | 151 | 132 |
| Proportion of life lived in present neighborhood | Percent | 49 | 59 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 65 | 53 | 60 |
| Participation index score, mean ¹ | Number | 4.4 | 3.8 | 6.7 | 4.8 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 6.5 | 5.1 |
| Improved farm practices, adoption rate, mean ² | Number | 52 | 42 | 56 | 50 | 39 | 43 | 54 | 46 |
| Housing facilities, mean | Number | | | | 4.5 | | | | 4.2 |
| Condition of dwelling, mean, rank ³ | Number | | | | 2.6 | | | | 2.7 |
| Owning automobile | Percent | | | | 31 | | | | 51 |

¹ The participation score was determined by allowing one point for membership in each organization, and three for regular attendance at meetings, two for usual, and one for occasional attendance. Three additional points were added for each office held within each organization. The score ranged from 0 through 30 points.

² Fifteen improved farm practices were considered applicable to farms in Van Buren County by Extension and other agricultural authorities. The adoption rate represented the proportion adopted of those appropriate to the particular farm.

³ A scale of 1 through 5 was used by enumerators of the *Rural Development Survey*, 1956, unpublished, to represent condition of housing. The best category rated 1 and the poorest 5.

111 acres, and 1 was a hired farm manager. About 30 percent of the nonfarm heads reported no farm incomes, while the remaining 70 percent reported an average of about \$578 of gross farm income. Operators who gained their livelihood mainly from non-farm sources obviously did not make much use of the land they owned or rented.

Farm operators owned, on the average, 160 acres per farm and rented an additional 35 acres. They, of course, made more use of the land available to them inasmuch as their livelihood was dependent on farming.

Although the difference in average annual income of farm and nonfarm families was not significant, the proportion making less than \$2,000 was much greater for the farm families, or 54 percent as compared with 47 percent.

RURAL ATTITUDE PROFILE

The Straus scale was used to measure the four areas of Innovation Proneness, Rural Life Preference, Primary Group Preference, and Economic Motivation. It is felt that these important value dimensions influence the alternatives selected in decision-making situations commonly met by rural people.

The results show a rather strong similarity among all but the highest income farm-operator groups. This group, composed of those with total family incomes of \$2,500 or more mainly or solely from agriculture, closely resembled Straus' sample of Washington State farm operators in their scores on the Innovation Proneness, Primary Group Preference, and Economic Motivation scales. However, they scored much higher on the Rural Life Preference scale than did the Washington sample. The other Van Buren County groups resembled rather closely the standardizing Washington population in their scores on the Rural Life Preference and Primary Group Preference scales. They scored low on the Innovation Proneness and Economic Motivation scales, in comparison with the Washington population (Figures 1 and 2).

Interpretation of these findings must, of necessity, be cautious because of the experimental nature of the measuring technique used and the small size of the sample. However, the data tend to be corroborated by other measures, as will be seen later. Apparently the relatively high-income farm group places more value on changes in farming techniques than does the low-income population. It may well be, of course, that improved farming techniques have little utility for those whose other farm resources, such as land, are limited in amount or quality, or for those for

RURAL ATTITUDES PROFILE

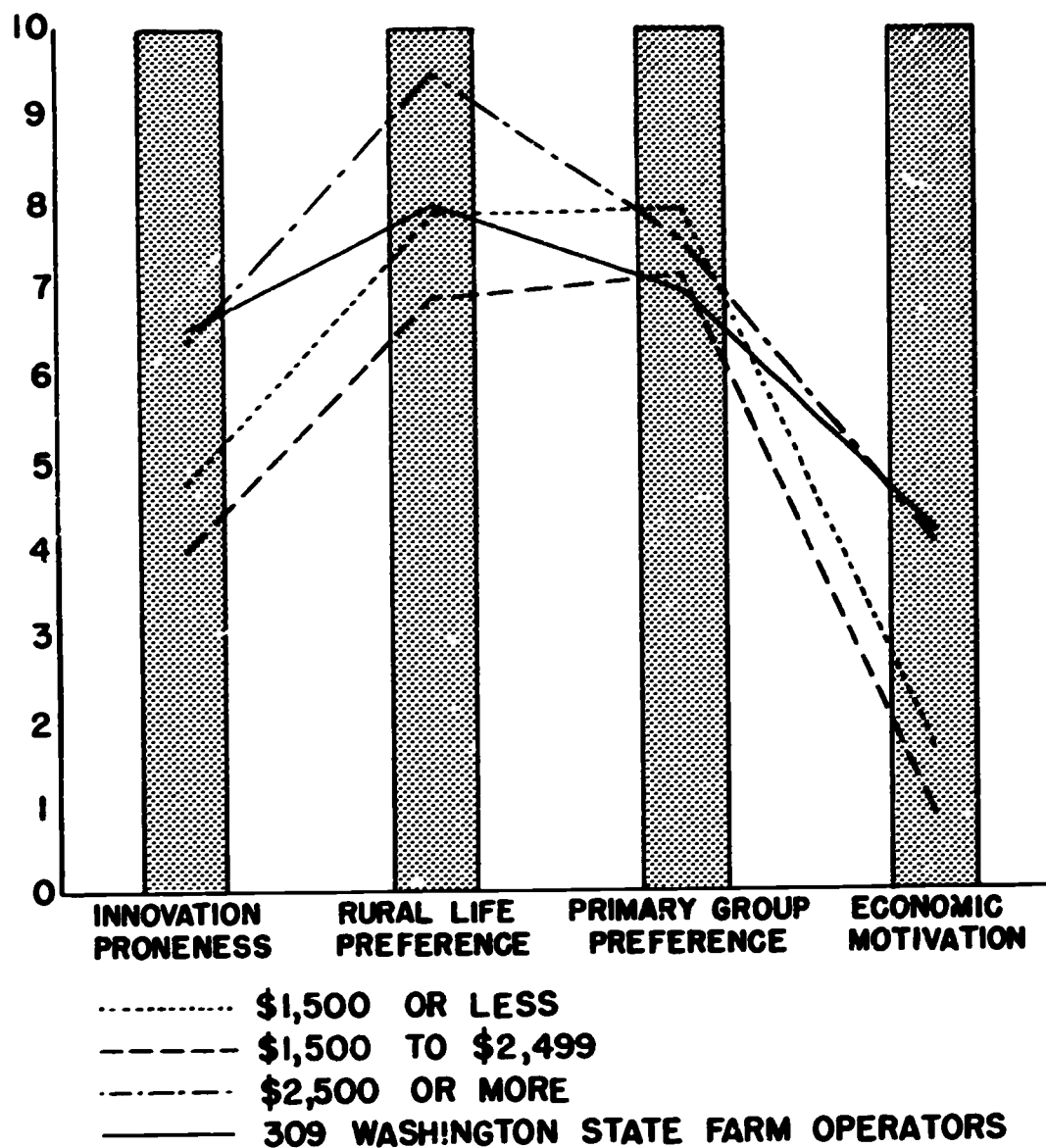


Figure 1. Rural Attitudes Profile for Family Heads with Family Income from Farm Sources Only or Mainly

The scores were adjusted to eliminate negative values by the addition of a constant, 4.

whom farming plays a minor part in contributing to the family income. Whatever the reason, traditional ways are undoubtedly given more value than in more commercial farming areas. These people also appear to give more importance to such traditional rural values as freedom from debt and self sufficiency than they do to monetary gain.

The fact that Rural Life Preference did not rate higher than it did among all but the high income farm group would seem to need some explanation. In direct questioning, 87 percent of the respondents stated they felt that people living in the country got

RURAL ATTITUDES PROFILE

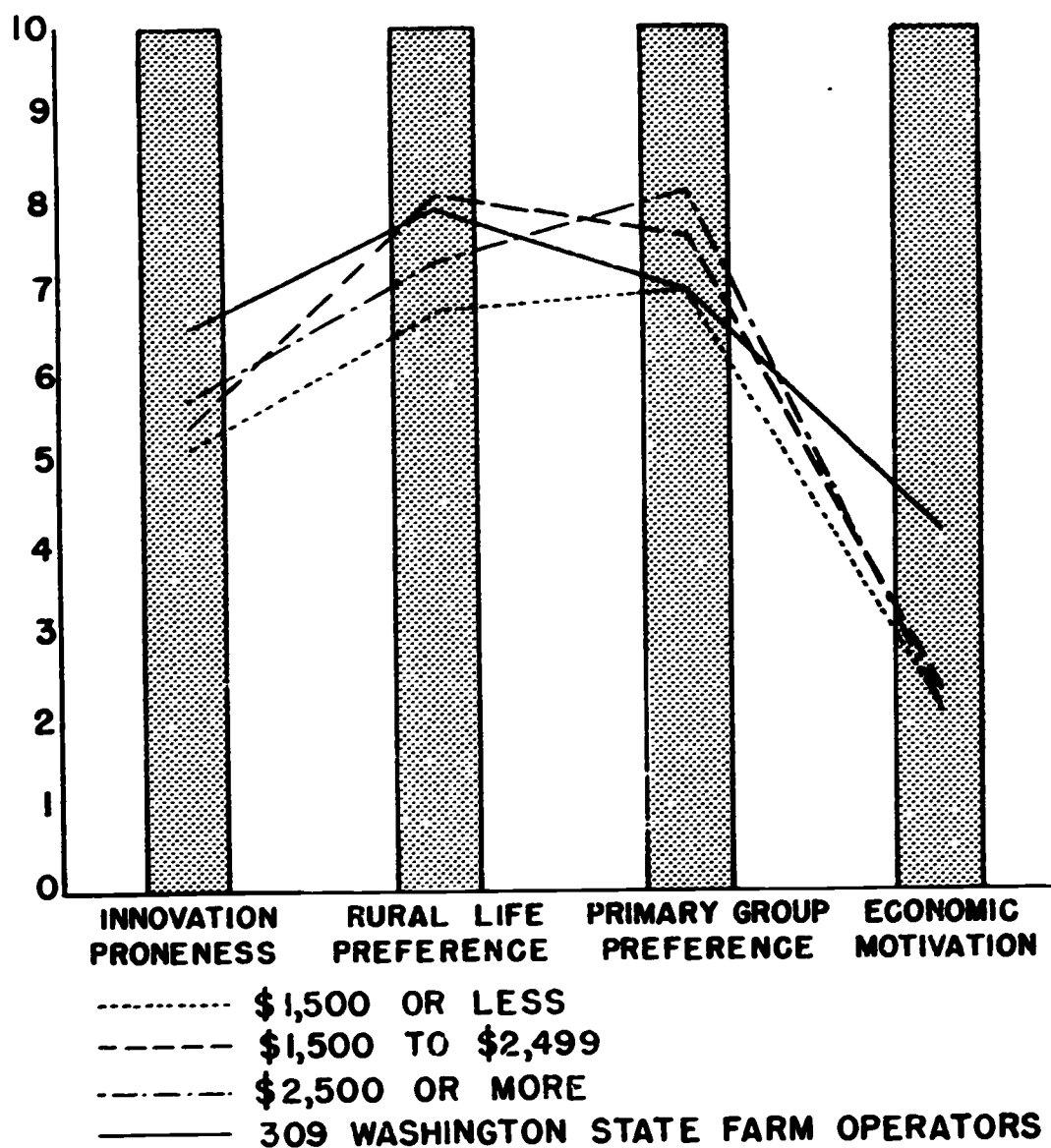


Figure 2. Rural Attitudes Profile for Family Heads with Family Income from Nonfarm Sources Mainly

The scores were adjusted to eliminate negative values by the addition of a constant, 4.

more satisfaction out of life than did those living in small towns or in cities. Only 8 percent felt that those living in small towns, and less than 1 percent felt that those living in cities, got the most satisfaction out of life. The remainder were undecided.

In response to another direct question, 52 percent of the respondents said they felt "strongly favorable" and 31 percent "favorable" to agriculture as an occupation. The few remaining were about evenly divided in expressing neutral or unfavorable attitudes. There was no significant difference among the various groups. The things they reportedly liked or disliked about being

a farmer are revealing. Some would first say that they "just liked everything about it." When pressed for more specific responses, they were inclined to mention the feeling of independence and self sufficiency farming gave them. This was the most frequently reported favorable aspect of farming given by most of the others as well. It accounted for approximately 70 percent of the responses. A liking for the open spaces and other aspects of the rural environment was the next most frequent response category. A scattering of responses mentioned liking to see things grow, the healthfulness of the life, and the freedom to try out new things.

The responses to the question regarding the things disliked about farming mainly centered about low income. Approximately two-fifths of the respondents mentioned prices, the "price squeeze", and lack of markets. As one put it "You just can't seem to make a living at it anymore." Other reasons mentioned by a scattered number included being subject to the vagaries of weather, insects, etc.; governmental controls; long hours; the hard work; and the type of work required. One-fourth of the respondents said they were unable to think of anything they disliked about farming. Again, there were no significant differences among the various size-of-income and source-of-income groups.

The responses noted above, together with the interviewers' observations, would seem to bear out that the attachment of these people is not so much to farming itself as it is to certain characteristics of life in the country. Some of this may be due to a survival of attitudes from an earlier frontier or subsistence way of life. The relatively low score on the rural life scale would therefore seem to lie in the character of the items used in the scale itself. Instead of stressing the naturalist's desire to be close to woods and streams and the love of hunting and fishing, and de-emphasizing the physical discomforts of the outdoor life, the emphasis in the scale is on the husbandman's enjoyment of watching his crops grow and the placing of little negative value on being tied down to chores and other onerous aspects of farming. The first mentioned items, in the main, would seem to be the determining ones for most of the Van Buren County population, the exception being the higher income farmers.

The figures reveal that three of the groups had higher scores on the Primary Group Preference scale than they did on the Rural Life Preference scale. These differences, though small, show a reversal of the slope of their profiles from that shown by the standardizing population.

Further evaluation of these people's attitudes toward agriculture as an occupation is provided from two questions regarding their aspirations for their children. Although they reported finding a great deal of satisfaction in their way of life for themselves, most of them either would like something different for their children or felt that this way of life was no longer open to young people.

To the question of whether they would advise their children to stay in farming or to prepare themselves for some other type of occupation, only 15 percent unqualifiedly said they would recommend staying in farming. An additional 6 percent said they would so advise if their children could get started on a farm. Over half (54 percent) said they would advise preparing for some other occupation, and one-fifth (21 percent) said this was a decision the children should make for themselves. There were no significant differences among the various groups on this question.

When presented with the problematical question of what business, profession, trade, or occupation they would most like to have their son take up if he had the ability and could have whatever training was needed, only one in twelve (8 percent) specified farming, although an additional one in eight (13 percent) mentioned an occupation related to agriculture such as county agent or vocational agriculture teacher. The largest proportion mentioning a specific occupation (15 percent) gave engineer as the occupation they would prefer for their son. Another 15 percent said they didn't know and 22 percent said they would let the boy decide.

When the response categories of those specifying a choice were grouped into farm or farm-related, professional, and trade occupations, and a comparison was made between the responses of those whose source of income was farm only or mainly or non-farm income mainly, statistically significant differences were observed (Table 3). Those with principally farm income preferred farm and farm-related occupations for their sons, while the others stated a preference for professional and trade occupations.

GOAL RANKING

The ranking of goals was introduced to the respondents by the interviewer stating: "We all place different value on certain things in life. Some people prize one thing, some another. Here are some pictures representing some of the things other people value." (At this point the "goal evaluation" cards were handed to the respondent.) "Will you place them all in order from the one

Table 3. Occupation Desired for Son, by Size and Source of Family Income

| Occupation desired | Income farm only or mainly | | | | Income nonfarm mainly | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | Less than \$1,500 | \$1,500 to \$2,499 | \$2,500 or more | All families | Less than \$1,500 | \$1,500 to \$2,499 | \$2,500 or more | All families |
| | <i>Number desiring</i> | | | | | | | |
| Farmer | 4 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| Farm related | 3 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| All agricultural | 7 | 6 | 2 | 15* | 2 | 7 | 1 | 10* |
| Engineer | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 11 |
| Medical doctor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Dentist | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Lawyer | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| All professional | 2 | 2 | 4 | 8* | 4 | 6 | 8 | 18* |
| Trade, skilled laborer | 3 | 0 | 2 | 5* | 5 | 9 | 3 | 17* |
| Let him decide | 4 | 6 | 3 | 13 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 13 |
| Don't know | 5 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 11 |

* Difference significant at 5 percent level, $X^2 = 7.85$ with 2 degree of freedom.

that means the most to you to the one that means the least to you?" In such a ranking, it is recognized that there will be some degree of arbitrariness in placing one card ahead of another. This is mainly confined to adjacent cards and diminishes the farther apart the cards are located in the ranking. Also, the average ranking by a number of individuals tends to cancel out this arbitrariness.

Although there were some variations, the respondents in this study were quite consistent in placing "Providing a good education for my children" first, and "Being known in the community as a successful man" last in their ranking of the seven goals. It is interesting to note that even those who get most of their family income from nonfarm sources ranked "Owning my farm free from debt" next to the top. No matter what their principal source of income, most of these respondents demonstrated considerable interest in their possession of land for the feeling of stability and security it gave them.

One of the greatest deviations from the general trend in ranking these goals occurred in the ranking by the highest income farm group. This group relegated "Providing a good education for my children" to third place and ranked "Having lots of good friends in the community" first, the reverse of the ranking of the other groups.

Another difference in ranking occurred when the lowest income farm group ranked "Having modern conveniences in the home" last, while the other groups placed it in fourth or fifth position (Table 4).

It is not easy to determine the reasons for the differences in the ranking of goals. The high income farm group, it will be recalled, was on the average considerably younger than the other farm groups and had completed more school grades than any group except the highest income nonfarm group. In addition, this group also had one of the highest proportions of individuals with school-age children. All of these characteristics, one would presume, should be associated with a higher valuation being placed on education. It may be that members of this group felt less of an economic handicap in providing for the education of their children so they were able to give more concern to other areas.

A logical explanation for the low value placed on modern conveniences by the low-income farm group is perhaps somewhat easier to develop. It might be hypothesized that this group's lack of experience with such conveniences has kept it from developing a strong desire for them.

**Table 4. Average Rank Given Seven Goals by Open-Country Residents,
by Source and Size of Family Income**

| Goal | Income farm only or mainly | | | | Income nonfarm mainly | | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | Less than \$1,500 | \$1,500 to \$2,499 | \$2,500 or more | All families | Less than \$1,500 | \$1,500 to \$2,499 | \$2,500 or more | All families |
| <i>Average rank¹</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Providing a good education for my children | 2.90 | 2.50 | 3.00 | 2.80 | 2.38 | 2.70 | 2.40 | 2.47 |
| Owning my farm free of debt | 2.71 | 3.36 | 2.73 | 2.91 | 3.29 | 2.75 | 3.16 | 3.00 |
| Having lots of good friends in the community | 3.45 | 3.14 | 2.36 | 3.09 | 3.43 | 3.50 | 3.24 | 3.39 |
| Being one's own boss | 4.14 | 3.53 | 4.00 | 3.92 | 4.43 | 4.03 | 4.68 | 4.34 |
| Having modern conveniences in the house | 4.87 | 4.07 | 3.83 | 4.35 | 3.71 | 4.16 | 4.28 | 4.11 |
| Having children settle near by | 4.68 | 4.64 | 4.91 | 4.73 | 5.00 | 4.41 | 5.16 | 4.82 |
| Being known in the community as a successful man | 4.80 | 5.93 | 5.91 | 5.42 | 5.21 | 5.17 | 5.04 | 5.13 |

¹ Goals were ranked by each family from 1 to 7, with 1 most important and 7 least important.

**Table 5. Average Rank Given Six Factors Associated with Social Status
by Source and Size of Family Income**

| Factor | Income farm only or mainly | | | | Income nonfarm mainly | | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | Less than \$1,500 | \$1,500 to \$2,499 | \$2,500 or more | All families | Less than \$1,500 | \$1,500 to \$2,499 | \$2,500 or more | All families |
| <i>Average rank¹</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Compliance with moral and ethical standards of the community | 1.81 | 1.33 | 1.42 | 1.56 | 1.51 | 1.52 | 1.23 | 1.46 |
| Personal qualities | 2.25 | 3.00 | 3.00 | 2.67 | 2.85 | 2.90 | 2.78 | 2.85 |
| Personal achievements | 3.29 | 2.86 | 2.92 | 3.06 | 2.79 | 3.19 | 3.00 | 3.04 |
| Family lineage | 3.95 | 3.79 | 3.60 | 3.82 | 4.15 | 3.94 | 3.65 | 3.88 |
| Property and wealth | 4.95 | 4.57 | 4.60 | 4.75 | 4.08 | 4.39 | 4.87 | 4.49 |
| Power and authority | 4.55 | 5.43 | 5.00 | 4.93 | 5.31 | 5.03 | 5.39 | 5.21 |

¹ Factors were ranked by each family from 1 to 6, with 1 most important and 6 least important.

After the respondents had ranked the seven goals, they were asked if there were other things that they prized more than those listed. Twenty responded. Most mentioned values involving an ethico-religious theme, such as "to live a good Christian life" or "to be known as an honest man." The remaining values were principally concerned with doing one's part by being a good citizen or by being an active member of the community, and keeping one's health.

ATTITUDES TOWARD EDUCATION

Changes between generations are much more easily accomplished and generate less personal and social disruption than is true of changes within generations. People of middle age or older in various ways have committed themselves and their resources to a particular mode of life from which they find it difficult if not impossible to extricate themselves, even if they should happen to be so inclined. For this reason, education of young people represents one of the most effective ways of meeting some of the major problems of concern to Rural Development Committees. Education opens up a wide array of promising alternatives from which the youth may choose at a time when he is relatively free to make such a choice. However, the attitudes of the adults undoubtedly have considerable influence on the ease with which their children may make necessary changes, especially on the extent to which they will take advantage of educational opportunities open to them. For this reason, a series of questions in the interview schedule were devoted to attitudes toward education.

Responses to the education questions were encouraging. Although actual performance may not measure up to verbal expression of expectation, most of the respondents were quite emphatic in their statements regarding the necessity of education in today's world. Quite frequently they related to the interviewers how they or their acquaintances recently had experienced difficulty in securing off-farm employment because of inadequate education — this in spite of the fact that most off-farm jobs in the area require little or no special training or skills. None of the respondents wanted their children to have less than a high school education. In fact, 69 percent of the nonfarm and 56 percent of the farm group with school-age children said they wanted their children to complete college. These wishes, it would seem, are not apt to be realized in most instances; four of the 20 families had children who had finished their schooling but only two children were reported to have had any college. The average number of years of school completed was 11.4. However, this does represent a considerable improvement over the educational ac-

complishments of their elders. The 1950 population census shows the median school years completed for the rural-farm population 25 years old and over in this county to have been 7.8 years. For the rural-nonfarm population, it was 8.7 years.

The educational desires for their children reflect the changing occupational aspirations they have for them, as reported earlier. However, the need for formal education for boys going into farming was not considered as essential. Only 38 percent of the farm group and 44 percent of the nonfarm group considered a college education necessary for a boy going into farming today. In fact, 8 percent of the former and 3 percent of the latter said that a high school education was not essential. There was rather close agreement that vocational agricultural training and 4-H Club work were desirable for young people going into farming. Between 85 and 90 percent indicated that such training was important or very important.

There was some dissatisfaction with the educational training available to farm boys in the area. In spite of this, few were able to give any specific suggestions as to how it might be improved. The scattered responses made mention of more vocational or practical agricultural training, and more or better facilities and teachers.

ATTITUDES REGARDING STATUS POSITIONS

Status refers to the social standing or prestige of a person or group in a community. It is the position that a person or group holds in public esteem. This social prestige may rest on wealth or it may be determined by race, nationality, religion, family lineage, or other factors. In some cultures, and within groups in other cultures, the status of an individual may be ascribed, that is determined by inheritance without reference to his individual capacities. In others, status is achieved, that is established by special qualities through individual effort.

The factors that determine social status among a particular people, whether these are inherited or developed, as well as the importance that is attached to status differences reveal a significant aspect of such a group's value orientation. If stress is placed upon rising in the status system, then individuals not only will act out the role expectations of their current status position, but will strive to learn the appropriate role of a higher position as well as to seek recognition for the achievements that will assure a rise in status. On the other hand, if changes in status are not

considered necessarily desirable or possible, then the individual will feel no compunction to change.

It is recognized readily that the former is the prevalent orientation in the United States. Considerable, some would say overweening emphasis has been placed on achievement and success in our country. In more recent years, however, the principal emphasis seems to have shifted so that the end — success — is given transcendent importance and the means of achieving ("how one plays the game") is often given only lip service. Although there is a rather vocal minority who decry this pursuit of success, there is little doubt but that it encompasses a major value complex in our society. Our interest here is in attempting to determine to what extent the rural people of Van Buren County share this prevalent emphasis.

In a manner similar to that used in the ranking of goals, respondents were asked to rank in order of importance six factors "other people have considered important in determining an individual's standing in his community." The six factors chosen (family lineage, property and wealth, power and authority, personal qualities, personal achievements, and compliance with the moral and ethical standards of the community) were selected as representing the more common determinants of status revealed by the research in this field.

Considering that "living a good life" was frequently volunteered as one of the most significant goals in their lives, it should not be surprising that this was uniformly rated the most important factor in determining a person's standing in his community (Table 5). Honesty, truthfulness, being a faithful church member, and neighboring, were some of the principal elements of this general factor that were stressed.

Personal qualities and personal achievement were ranked quite close together in second and third positions. There may be some significance in the fact that both of the lowest income groups ranked personal qualities ahead of personal achievement, the reverse of the ranking by the other groups. A friendly, outgoing personality and intelligence seemed to be the main personal qualities that were valued positively. Physical attractiveness was also important, especially among the younger individuals. Personal achievements considered significant were mainly in the vocational or economic areas, attention being given to what one had done with the "start" one had in life rather than solely in absolute terms.

Family lineage ranked fourth, considerably below the previous factors, but also considerably above the next item in the ranking. The lineage here prized carries no aristocratic connotations but stresses multigenerational, but respectable, residence in the area. The place of this factor in the ranking would seem to indicate that although the barriers against outsiders have been broken down to some extent, they probably still remain something of a hindrance to rapid and complete acceptance in the community. The lowest income nonfarm group was the only one to deviate from the ranking of this factor. It placed property and wealth ahead of family.

The remaining ranking were property and wealth fifth, and power and authority last.

Although we have no comparable rankings for the country as a whole, it is apparent that the rural people of Van Buren County do not attach as much importance to achievement or to success (at least what others consider success) as they do to certain other values. It is also important to note the high degree of agreement among all the income-size and income-source groups.

Before being asked to rank the social status factors, respondents were requested to name the individuals in their community who had the highest standing and the ones who had the lowest. Twenty-seven of those named as having the highest standing and five of those named as having the lowest standing were found to be among the sample from whom completed schedules were obtained, thus providing a means, albeit limited, for relating the subjective evaluation of status criteria with a measure more closely related to actual behavior.

The high status persons named were older than those who named them. All the low status persons were of a similar age to those doing the naming (Table 6).

The average number of school grades completed was somewhat low for the low status persons, but there was no difference between the high status persons and those naming them.

Although there was no difference between those named and those doing the naming in the proportion engaged in nonfarm work, the high status persons had fewer in the laborer-type positions than did those who did the naming, while the low status persons had more. The members of the high status group apparently spent less time in nonfarm work, for their average annual earnings from this source, even with presumably higher paying jobs, was less than that of those who named them. The proportion

of total family income from farm sources was higher for both the high and low status groups than it was for those naming them. The incomes reported were much higher than the average for the entire sample, which raises some question as to the representativeness of those naming as well as those named. However, the average total family income of all groups was so similar, it would not appear to be a significant factor in determining the social status of these people.

The amount of farm land owned did seem to be positively related to social status. This also appeared to be true for the number of housing facilities possessed (such as running water, refrigerator, television, etc.). The housing of the high status group also was better than that of the others, while that of the low status group apparently was the same as the others.

Social participation, as measured by organizational membership, also was positively related to social status. Having participation much above the average did not seem to be necessary for high status, however.

It is seen that high and low status persons tended to differ from others in certain observable characteristics. However, in harmony with their subjective ranking of status determinants, the reasons given by the respondents for their choice of high and low status persons in their communities were most frequently couched in moralistic terms — "He is (or is not) a *good* man."

Table 6. Comparison of Persons Given High and Low Status with Those Naming Them to Such Status

| Item | | High status (N = 27) | | Low status (N = 5) | |
|--|---------|----------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | | Persons naming | Persons named | Persons naming | Persons named |
| Age of respondent, mean | Years | 46.2 | 56.7 | 46.4 | 47.0 |
| School grades completed, median | Number | 9.4 | 9.2 | 8.3 | 7.7 |
| Major nonfarm work | Number | | | | |
| No nonfarm work | | 7 | 9 | 1 | 1 |
| Professional, managerial, etc. | | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Clerical, sales, etc. | | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Craftsman, foreman, etc. | | 3 | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| Operative, etc. | | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Laborer, except farm | | 10 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Nonfarm earnings ¹ | Dollars | 1,458 | 1,242 | 1,565 | 1,190 |
| Gross farm income ¹ | Dollars | 876 | 1,466 | 1,180 | 1,153 |
| Total family income | Dollars | 2,366 | 2,612 | 2,928 | 2,238 |
| Farm land owned ¹ | Acres | 134 | 207 | 220 | 72 |
| Housing facilities, mean | Number | 3.3 | 5.7 | 3.2 | 2.2 |
| Organizational membership, mean | Number | 2.0 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 1.6 |
| Housing index score, mean ² | Number | 3.0 | 2.3 | 3.0 | 2.0 |

¹ Averages (mean) are for those reporting the item.

² Score of 1 represents best housing, 5 poorest.

CONCLUSIONS

The chronic low incomes of families in this and similar rural areas can be explained only in terms of a complex of influences. Limited employment capabilities and capacities, selective migration, high birth rate, lack of adequate farm resources to permit adoption of modern farming methods, relative geographic isolation from industrial centers, and many other factors play a part in impeding adjustment. This study does not minimize the importance of any of these influences. It does, however, seek a wider recognition of the importance of another factor in assessing this problem, namely, the system of attitudes and values through which each individual's decisions for action must be filtered.

The picture which emerges of the organization of the rural population of Van Buren County is that of a highly homogeneous group with a close, primary-type group life and an emphasis on personal, neighborhood level interaction. One is impressed with the survival of values that once were widely shared in our country. For many the revelation revives fading emotional ties to these values and a clearer realization of the extent to which they have been lost.

Many changes have, of course, occurred in this area and adjustments of some degree have been made, but there still is evidence of an influence from an earlier self-sufficient, subsistence way of life. For the people of this area, this influence still colors many of their attitudes toward, and their consequent reactions to, the impersonal, fast-moving commercial orientation of the outside world. Action agents who are concerned with encouraging changes and easing the stress of change may legitimately pause to consider the relative merits of the new and the old values before the latter are indiscriminately discarded in favor of the former. Might there not be ways to adopt the new without completely sacrificing the old?

These people place a high value on rural living, but have some doubt about farming as a desirable occupation. For most of them, change for its own sake or for purely economic reasons would not seem to have very high priority. However, many have left the area (temporarily they hope) to work in order to accumulate a stake that will enable them to return to live in the environment they love. Work in and of itself may not be valued highly, but if they consider the ends are worthwhile these people apply themselves energetically. Off-farm occupational opportunities in the vicinity would be especially welcomed. Those that involve out-of-door activities, such as guiding hunters and fishermen, would be seen as ideal.

More extended education for the younger generation is seen as a necessity in order for them to compete in the world in which they will be required to live. It is apparent, however, that many of the parents and children are not yet enough aware of this need to withstand the sacrifices required under their circumstances to reach such a goal.

The analysis of value orientation through a study of factors determining social status reveals a configuration basically the same as that of the rest of the country, but with considerably less emphasis on success or achievement in the usual sense of these terms. Full social participation depends on some degree of acceptance of the moral commitments of the community's value orientation rather than on such symbols of success as conspicuous consumption or power position. A strong strain of social equality runs through the social intercourse of the people. There are no observable barriers to communication such as one might expect to find in some areas of the State where social classes and ethnic differences are pronounced and operate to restrict the free flow of communication. This should make the problem of gaining acceptance for a program of action relatively easy, provided that it can be defined in terms acceptable to the people of the area.

In this report an attempt has been made to point out some of the implications of the findings for those working in applied fields. It is frequently overlooked, however, by both researchers and persons engaged in action programs that knowledge gained through research often is not directly applicable to operational problems. There is also the distinction between gaining knowledge and gaining acceptance of that knowledge in a cultural setting. However, with the reservations noted in the introduction, this report may provide some new insights for those working in the challenging field of assisting people to arrive at some satisfactory solutions of their problems.

**Location of the Main Station, Branch Stations, and Substations of the
Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station**

